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Movement

This document describes how the concept of shape may be used to link different approaches to movement. It includes strategies to develop shape through gymnastics, through games, and through dance.

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Movement

This document explores shape and uses it as a theme to link different approaches to movement. Shape through gymnastics, shape through games, and shape through dance are developed in different ways. The lesson on gymnastics uses a directed approach, while the sections on games and dance are progressively more flexible.

Since the concept of shape underlies much of the work in Environmental Studies, the Arts, and Communication, each section of this booklet indicates a few possible applications of the basic theme in other areas of study. It is assumed that the teacher will integrate these into the total program. There are many words used throughout this unit that would be appropriate for subsequent language experience.

In all three areas, the teacher might motivate the children by reading a story about shape; several are suggested in the bibliography at the end of this document.

Shape Through Gymnastics

The lesson in gymnastics begins with the practice of a familiar activity that does not require apparatus. The teacher should specify these activities before the children leave the classroom so that they may begin immediately on entering the gymnasium. Children enjoy repeating tasks which they have performed successfully; it gives them a feeling of

security. In this case the teacher could profitably relate the activity to the story that has just been read. A scatter formation is recommended for most activities in this lesson.

Activities along the floor

In this section as in several others, prepositions are used as key movement words: *along* the floor, *off* the floor, and so on. In essence, children will be applying the principles of shape (or of space awareness) to their activities on the floor.

Travelling could include walking, running, skipping, and hopping, and the teacher might encourage the children to use parts of their bodies other than their feet; they might move on their stomachs, hands, or knees, for example. Using their chosen forms of locomotion, the children can explore patterns and pathways: round shapes, square shapes, or twisty shapes. In outlining imaginary shapes on the floor, the children should be well spaced and should use light resilient movements.

Rolling can be accomplished on the floor using mats, or outside on the grass if there are no mats. If mats are used, they should all point in one direction and they should be well spaced. Activities could include: making the body into a shape that will roll along the mat



or ground; rolling in a different shape; rolling smoothly (practising to make the roll better); and, finally, making a pattern with rolling movements. The teacher will watch the children and the children will watch each other. On the basis of the observations they make, children will discuss such points as: What is a good roll? Are some rolls better than others? What different shapes were attempted (round, long, thin, oval, in rolling forward, backward, and sideways)?

Activities on the floor

Movement under this heading would include activities in which the body rests on the hands, the feet being off the floor momentarily. (The children should be encouraged to bring their feet down softly.) The teacher could ask the children to move their legs while their hands are on the floor, then make shapes with their legs. Shapes might be wide, curled, twisty, long, thin, symmetrical, or asymmetrical. The latter two are big words for little people, but they have great significance in both movement and the visual arts, and children will soon learn what they mean once they have felt what it is like to be symmetrical or asymmetrical.

Activities off the floor

The first activity under this heading would be to jump as high as possible and to land safely and softly. In fact, the children could learn the words *light* and *resilient* by trying to land that way. Landings are important, not only for safety, but for the control necessary to lead into another movement. Second, the children could jump to make a shape in the air: wide, long, thin, or curved. The teacher should encourage children to do their best at all times; they should aim for quality in the stretching and curled shapes.

Activities with small apparatus (skipping ropes)

Teachers need patience in helping children to skip rope. It is a highly complex activity for young children, involving a considerable degree of neuromuscular control. Here are some suggested activities for this phase of the *shape* unit:

- free practice of any activity with the skipping rope;
- practice in skipping;
- making the rope into a shape on the floor;
- making the rope into a different shape;
- walking along the rope (an element of balance as well as of shape is involved here);
- jumping into and out of the shape (children should once more land lightly and resiliently);
- jumping over the shape (a consideration here is take-off, that is, whether the child starts the jump from one foot or both feet; he or she should find out that jumping from one foot to the other foot is a leap);
- changing the rope into a round shape and moving into it and out of it with the body's weight on the hands.

Group activities

For group work, children can rotate among activities in various parts of the gymnasium, so that each child will experience a variety of shapes and movements. There should be no more than four or five children in a group. Here are some suggestions:

Group 1: Cane, hoop, two individual mats

Move over the cane, using wide body shapes; jump into and out of the hoop, using thin shapes; roll on the mats, using round shapes.

Group 2: Climbing frame and ladder at stretch height

Explore ways of climbing, making your body wide and thin.

Group 3: Skipping ropes

Practise any familiar activity with a rope.

Group 4: One bench, one balance bench, two individual mats

Move along the bench; show a variety of shapes; move over and along the balance bench; use the mat for landing and rolling.

Group 5: Two canes, two hoops

Travel over the two canes, using a weight-on-hands movement; make bridging shapes over and in hoops.

Group 6: Storming stand and board for a bench inclined up onto an agility box or trestle, two individual mats

Jump from board, make a shape in the air, land softly, roll on the mat.

Relaxation: After all apparatus has been put away, find a spot and lie quietly on the floor.



The foregoing is intended as one lesson, but the material can be used several times, with only one or two of the challenges changed. In fact, repetition is essential.

In later lessons, the *shape* theme may be developed in some or all of the following ways:

- increasing the complexity of apparatus arrangements;
- introducing shape in balancing various body parts;

- linking balance shapes with rolling shapes and jumping shapes, and travelling to make more complex patterns or sequences;
- introducing other small apparatus;
- using shape as the limiting factor in tasks based on other aspects of movement;
- encouraging a higher standard of performance (always compatible with the children's abilities).

The teacher may also develop the idea of shape in connection with large apparatus such as the box horse, bench, trampette, or mat. All have distinctive shapes.

Once children are conscious of shape, the concept can be applied in many classroom activities. The following are suggestions as to how ideas of shape can be used in studies of the environment.

Children could:

- explore the shapes of signs and other objects in the environment;
- gauge the number of rectangles in a building;
- investigate how a seed changes shape as it grows into a plant;
- identify animal and bird footprints by shape;
- explore shapes that can be made with a string;
- observe the changing shapes of clouds;
- examine the shapes of containers, bottles, and candles;
- attempt generalizations from shape: why are balloons or balls round?
- classify objects according to shape;
- investigate the functional shapes of objects such as cages, dishes, tools, and books;
- match tools with their silhouettes on the work bench;
- investigate playing areas: circles (some-



times concentric), rectangles (as in basketball and badminton), series of shapes (as in shuffleboard and hopscotch), diamonds, squares, or irregular shapes;

- determine whether a shape changes when turned—e.g., Are the following different shapes?



- create or invent games: a suggestion such as *take your ball, the floor, and the wall and make up a game with them* can lead to the creation of many shapes, formations, and floor patterns;
- experiment with the use of balls: making shapes while bouncing and catching (*can you make your body wide, thin, round, long, twisted?*) pat-bouncing

while standing, crouching, kneeling, or lying down (one child makes bridge shapes, partner rolls ball under the bridge, runs round to retrieve), making shapes in three's (one makes body shapes or bridges, partners roll or bounce ball to each other under the arches).

The concept of shape can be applied far beyond the confines of the gymnasium. Some ideas for applying the idea of shape to the study of the environment were given under *Shape Through Gymnastics*. Here are some further suggestions pertaining to Communication.

The children could:

- select words that suggest shapes;
- experiment with the shape of words, both orally and in writing;
- explore the shape of letters;
- investigate shapes identified from magazine pictures;
- identify shapes within the classroom;
- write their own stories and assemble them in a *shape booklet*;
- experiment with the shapes of jigsaw puzzle pieces;
- devise games using the shape of the mouth to convey meaning;
- play games of snap using shapes;
- write a story about a movement activity involving the making of shapes;
- construct geometrical shapes;
- classify objects according to shape;
- investigate multiple shapes in a single object (e.g., a funnel).

Games Through Shape

The theme of *shape* is used here not as a lesson, as in gymnastics, but as a series of ideas showing the application of *shape* to aspects of the games program.

It is suggested that a teacher draw from and develop the ideas that are rele-

vant to the needs of the children and to interest already generated. Many of the categories listed below overlap.

Games

- *formations*: circle, scatter, square, line(s), triangle;
- *kinds*: circle games (singing and chanting games often have a circle); square games such as *Corner Spry*, *Four Square*; scatter games such as *Mr. Wolf*, *Big "A"*, *Little "A"*; line games such as *Piggy in the Middle*, *Two Dogs and a Bone*;
- *small apparatus*: bats and strikers, racquets, the hand as a bat, sticks (hockey, field hockey, plastic, Safe-T-Play hockey), bean bags, hoops, scoops, skipping ropes, quoits (deck-tennis rings), balls (most are round, but they come in many sizes and colours), pylon-type markers (bowling pins, skittles, Indian clubs, detergent bottles), canes;
- *targets*: goal in hockey and soccer, basket (does it have the same shape with a net?), backboard, bull's eye, targets of various shapes for accuracy-throw (square, rectangle, circle, triangle, face, etc.), pail, carton, suspended hula hoop.

Shape Through Dance

When children dance, their inner selves speak, often much more eloquently than they could in words. The purpose of this section is to suggest ways in which an imaginative teacher may develop the concept of shape through dance. These ideas may be adapted to many situations.

Pathways over the floor: A pathway could start and finish in the same place, enclosing a space that is circular or angular. The pathway itself could be curved, meandering, or straight. Children could also consider direction (for-

ward, backward, sideways) or speed (slow, fast, accelerating).

Body shapes: The limbs could be moved into certain shapes, perhaps as part of activities such as waving good-bye. The whole body could be used to represent shapes (curled-up, extended, arched, twisted, jack-knifed, wide, thin, symmetric, asymmetric). These shapes could be extended to form a dance based on one particular shape, first alone and then with a partner. Then contrasting shapes could be used as the basis of a dance, again alone and with a partner. Finally a whole sequence of shapes could be fashioned into a dance, both solo and in pairs, and the shapes could be formed at various levels, high in the air or near the floor. Another variation would involve combined body shapes—curled body and stretched arms, for example.

Shapes as stimuli: The children could duplicate the shape of sounds they have encountered in other studies (round, long, short) or they could respond to the shape of sounds produced by various instruments. The drum, for example, produces a solid, deliberate sound that can be used to signal changes from one shape to another. The cymbal and the triangle also produce distinctive sounds that the children might interpret as *wavy*, *undulating*, *fingery*, *explosive*, or *delicate*, as the case may be. Words can also be used as stimuli; some that lend themselves to interpretation are: *gnarled*, *triangular*, *arched*, and *spiral*. Trees can also be imitated: poplars, oaks, weeping willows, driftwood. Other objects that can inspire shapes might include buildings, lampshades, and animals. More complex interpretations might lead to a dance based on a story



about shape. Such a dance could grow into a dance drama, involving partners using matching or contrasting shapes or perhaps a whole group making square, round, or star shapes. Such a dance could include other stimuli as well: a drum or tambourine could signal a change from one shape to another, for example. After basing a dance-drama on the story with which the unit was started, the children could make up their own stories for interpretation, basing them on shapes that they can duplicate with their bodies. Caves, doorways, imaginary creatures, or implements can all be imitated by the human body.

Some suggestions for exploring areas of the Arts through the concept of shape are given below. Teachers will find many ways to adapt these activities to their own objectives and to the needs and interests of the children. The suggestions are separated only for convenience in planning.

Children could:

- find buildings of different shapes in advertisements;
- cut out shapes and paste them together to form a picture;
- attempt to detect shapes in music and express these in drawings or paintings;
- find shapes in pictures;
- depict the characters in a poem or story in silhouette;
- make shapes with their own mouths;
- find patterns in pictures or in nature;
- make their own patterns with pencils or paints;
- classify musical instruments by shape;
- detect the shapes in familiar rote songs;
- listen for high and low sounds;
- move in shapes to music;
- simulate a shape while others guess what it is;
- dramatize movements of animals;
- blow paint and cut shapes.

Conclusions: The material in this unit relates to one theme, *shape*. Similar units may be developed on other themes. It should be noted that in this unit exceptional children can be integrated into regular programs.

Evaluation in this unit is simple: *Are the children doing their best and enjoying it?*

Books Relating to Unit on Movement (Shape)

Amberley, ed. *The Wing on a Flea*. Toronto: Little Brown & Co. (Canada), 1961.

Atwood, Ann. *The Little Circle*. New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1967.

Bilbrough, A., and Jones, Percy. *Physical Education in the Primary School*. London: University of London Press, 1968.

Boorman, Joyce. *Creative Dance in the First Three Grades*. Toronto: Longman Canada, 1969.

Gillespie, D. Craig. *Weeple People*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Co. of Canada, 1971.

Ipcar, Dahlov. *The Calico Jungle*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965.

Johnson, Crockett. *Harold and the Purple Crayon*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

London County Council. *Movement Education for Infants*. London: County Hall, London, 1964.

Film

Free to Move. Produced by Brockenhurst Studios. 35 minutes, colour, 16mm. (Cost approx. \$180.) Obtainable from: Schools Research Council, Southern Film Productions, Brockenhurst Studios, Brockenhurst, Hampshire, England.

